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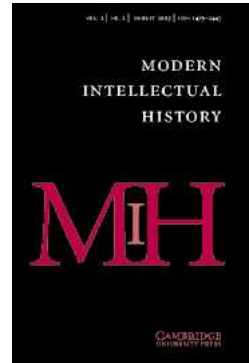
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ENTHUSIASM AND ENLIGHTENMENT: FAITH AND PHILOSOPHY IN THE THOUGHT OF CHRISTIAN THOMASIUS^{*}

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“Enthusiasm” has been described as the intellectual opposite of the Enlightenment, its “anti-self”. It stood for a religion of the “heart” rather than the “head”, and was associated with the extreme, millenarian sects on the fringes of established Protestantism. The relationship between religious enthusiasm and enlightened philosophy, however, could be closer than is often thought. Here I focus on the example of the jurist and philosopher Christian Thomasius (1655–1728), who is considered to be one of the first and most influential representatives of the early Enlightenment in Protestant Germany. Usually, Thomasius is described as a sort of classical enlightened thinker who separated the question of religious truth from the pursuit of secular philosophy, and it is implied that the interpretation of Thomasius’s religious beliefs contributes little, if anything, to the understanding of his philosophical views. His religious views, however, not only were regarded by contemporaries as an example of religious “enthusiasm”. These “enthusiastic” religious beliefs were also more important to his philosophy than is often argued. They were part of a programme for religious and intellectual renewal and reform which, Thomasius believed, would prepare the reform of Lutheran philosophy from the obsolete, “scholastic” intellectual traditions it had inherited from the papal church. This essay examines the often complex development of Thomasius’s religious views in their historical context and their significance for his wider “enlightened” intellectual interests.

This essay examines the importance of religion for the origins of the German Enlightenment around 1700. In particular, I shall focus on a central figure of early eighteenth-century intellectual history: the jurist and philosopher Christian Thomasius (1655–1728). Now known mainly for his criticism of witchcraft trials and judicial torture, Thomasius has long been regarded as one of the first and most influential representatives of the early Enlightenment

* I should like to thank Professor Tony La Vopa and Dr Nicholas Phillipson for their very helpful comments on a draft of this article.

in the German territories.¹ In the course of the famous debate on “What is Enlightenment?”, to which Immanuel Kant contributed his well-known essay, the writer Friedrich Gedike described Thomasius as the founder of the Enlightenment in Germany, the philosopher to whom “we owe a large part of our intellectual and material felicity”.² A few years later Friedrich Schiller praised him for his fearless opposition to scholastic “pedantry”.³ In recent scholarship Thomasius continues to be credited with questioning the authority of obsolete, “scholastic” learning and with contributing to an intellectual revival of German universities after a period of decline following the end of the Thirty Years War.⁴

As a religious thinker he is usually presented as a classical theorist of the Enlightenment, who separated the question of religious truth from the pursuit of secular philosophy. He is not considered an atheist, but it is widely claimed that Thomasius’s secular philosophical positions were “independent” of his religious beliefs. Werner Schneiders, for example, wrote that although Thomasius’s philosophy was for a short time in the 1690s strongly influenced by religious mysticism, this was no more than a passing phase. It reflected a religious and psychological crisis, from which Thomasius recovered around 1700, making it possible for him to return to a rationalist and secular philosophy.⁵ In a recent important work Ian Hunter has argued that Thomasius’s aim was to “detranscendentalize” political philosophy, that is, to separate it from the pursuit of true faith by relegating religious belief to a private, spiritual relationship with God which did not interfere with philosophy’s monopoly in worldly affairs.⁶

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- 1 E. Bloch, “Christian Thomasius, ein deutscher Gelehrter ohne Misere”, in idem, *Naturrecht und menschliche Würde* (Frankfurt am Main, 1985); W. Schneiders, *Naturrecht und Liebesethik* (Hildesheim, 1971); F. Vollhardt, ed., *Christian Thomasius (1655–1728): Neue Forschungen im Kontext der Frühaufklärung* (Tübingen, 1997); P. Schröder, *Christian Thomasius zur Einführung* (Dresden, 1999); Frank Grunert, *Normbegründung und politische Legitimität: Zur Rechts- und Staatsphilosophie der deutschen Aufklärung* (Frühe Neuzeit 57; Tübingen, 2000); Ian Hunter, *Rival Enlightenments: Civil and Metaphysical Philosophy in Early Modern Germany* (Cambridge, 2001).
 - 2 “Wir alle verdanken ihm einen großen Theil unserer intellektuellen und materiellen Glückseligkeit” (quoted in Martin Pott, “Christian Thomasius und Gottfried Arnold”, in Dietrich Blaufuß and Friedrich Niewöhner, eds., *Gottfried Arnold (1666–1714)* [Wiesbaden, 1995], 247–65, 247).
 - 3 See Schiller to Goethe, 29 May 1799, in S. Seidel, ed., *Der Briefwechsel zwischen Schiller und Goethe*, vol. 2: *Briefe des Jahre 1798–1805* (Munich, 1985), 213.
 - 4 N. Hammerstein, *Jus und Historie* (Göttingen, 1972); for a less pessimistic view see R. J. W. Evans, “German Universities after the Thirty Years’ War”, in *History of the Universities I* (1981), 169–89.
 - 5 Schneiders, *Naturrecht und Liebesethik*, which remains one of the most important works on the thought of Christian Thomasius.
 - 6 Hunter, *Rival Enlightenments*.

Frank Grunert has recently argued that Thomasius's appeals to Scripture in his philosophical works were rhetorical and prudential, rather than a sign of a meaningful connection between his religion and his philosophy.⁷

Research has therefore concentrated on Thomasius's supposedly "secular" moral and political ideas, rather than on his religious thought.⁸ The emphasis of this essay, however, will be on the nature and development of Thomasius's religious views, because these too are important for an understanding of his significance for the intellectual history of the early German Enlightenment—more important, perhaps, than has been thought before. There are two main reasons for paying attention to Thomasius's religious thought. One is that his contemporaries often considered his writings to be controversial, not so much because they were a-religious, but because they were heterodox, often appearing dangerously close to a form of religious "enthusiasm", which was associated with politically and theologically subversive millenarian sects. This in itself makes Thomasius's religious views worth attention.

But Thomasius's supposedly secular thought also has deeper roots in these controversial religious beliefs and in his seemingly idiosyncratic arguments about the nature of Christian faith than has previously been suggested. As we shall see, faith and philosophy in Thomasius's thought are more closely intertwined than his well-established reputation as a champion of a secular Enlightenment suggests. This raises important questions about the nature of the Enlightenment in the German territories.

In recent years the notion of the Enlightenment as the story of the "rise of modern paganism" and the transition to a modern secular society has been questioned. A number of scholars have shown the extent to which religious concerns formed an integral part of enlightened thought, well beyond the early eighteenth century.⁹ David Sorkin, for example, has argued that there was a

7 F. Grunert, "Antiklerikalismus und christlicher Anspruch im Werk von Christian Thomasius", in J. Mondot, ed., *Der Kampf der Aufklärung: Kirchenkritik und Religionskritik zur Aufklärungszeit* (Berlin, 2004), 41.

8 Two important exceptions are the articles by Friedrich de Boor, "Die ersten Vorschläge des Christian Thomasius 'wegen Aufrichtung einer Neuen Academie zu Halle' aus dem Jahre 1690", in E. Donnert, ed., *Europa in der frühen Neuzeit: Festschrift für Günther Mühlhordt*, vol. 4 (Weimar, 1997), and the article by H. Dreitzel, "Christliche Aufklärung durch fürstlichen Absolutismus: Thomasius und die Destruktion des frühneuzeitlichen Konfessionsstaates", in Vollhardt, ed., *Christian Thomasius*.

9 The description of the Enlightenment as the "rise of modern paganism" derives from Peter Gay, *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation. Vol. 1: The Rise of Modern Paganism* (New York, 1966). Recent literature focusing on the continuing importance of religion includes, e.g., H.-E. Bödeker, "Die Religiosität der Gelehrten", in K. Gründer and H. Rengstorf, eds., *Religionskritik und Religiosität in der deutschen Aufklärung* (Heidelberg, 1989); K. Haakonssen, *Enlightenment and Religion: Rational Dissent in Eighteenth-Century Britain*

“middle way” between a secular Enlightenment and traditional theology. This was the “theological” or “religious Enlightenment”, which aimed to use modern, rational thought to reform theology and bring it closer to the essence of religious faith.¹⁰ Thomasius’s thought, however, was not an example of a “religious Enlightenment” of this kind. His religious views were closer to the “enthusiasm” that has been described as the “anti-self” of the Enlightenment than to the moderate, rational theology associated with the “religious Enlightenment”.¹¹ His views were similar to those of the extreme millenarian sects on the fringes of German Protestantism, which emphasized the importance of sincerity and the believer’s heart over the authority of institutions, formulaic professions of faith and subtle doctrinal argument. And yet, his “enthusiastic” views are closely entwined with his ideas on history, moral philosophy, and the study of nature.

The first part of this essay deals with three stages in the complex development of Thomasius’s religious ideas. The first of these, in the late 1680s and early 1690s, is characterized by a voluntarist theology; the second, beginning in the early to mid-1690s, reflected a shift to a more extreme position, which his contemporaries suspected of being an example of religious “enthusiasm”; the third, from around 1703, is marked by an attempt to avoid some of the enthusiastic implications of his earlier thought, though Thomasius’s religious beliefs remained highly heterodox and continued to attract criticism from more conservative contemporaries. I shall then examine the significance of Thomasius’s religious heterodoxy for his “secular” philosophy and consider his views about the state of corruption into which modern philosophy had fallen: a state of corruption which could only be remedied by a reform of religious faith. For although faith and philosophy were conceptually distinct, they were at the same time dependent on each other.

Before turning to the examination of Thomasius’s religious views, it might be helpful to provide a short biography.¹² Christian Thomasius was born in January 1655 in Leipzig, the son of Jakob Thomasius, professor of Rhetoric and Moral Philosophy at the local university. Raised as a Lutheran, he studied philosophy

(Cambridge, 1996); B. Young, *Theological Debate in England, from Locke to Burke* (Oxford, 1998); D. Sorkin, *The Berlin Haskalah and German Religious Thought* (London, 2000); M. Doody, “The Mystics’ Enlightenment” (The Saintsbury Lecture, University of Edinburgh, November 2002); Nigel Aston, *Christianity and Revolutionary Europe* (Cambridge, 2002).

10 Sorkin, *The Berlin Haskalah*, 17.

11 J. G. A. Pocock, “Enthusiasm: The Antiself of the Enlightenment”, in A. J. La Vopa and L. Klein, eds., *Enthusiasm and Enlightenment in Europe, 1650–1850* (San Marino, CA, 1998), pp. 7–28, 11.

12 For a short introduction to Thomasius’s life, see R. Lieberwirth, “Christian Thomasius (1655–1728)”, in G. Jerouschek and A. Sames, eds., *Aufklärung und Erneuerung* (Hanau/Halle, 1994).

and law in Leipzig and Frankfurt an der Oder and began practising as an advocate in his home town of Leipzig from the early 1680s, but soon turned to teaching law to university students as a private lecturer. From the late 1680s Thomasius became associated with Pietism, a quasi-Puritan reform movement within the Lutheran church, whose aim was to return the church to a sincere, practical form of Christianity. Like many Pietists he was expelled from the Electorate of Saxony after disputes with the traditionalist theological faculty in Leipzig, and like them he settled in the friendlier territories of the Calvinist Elector of Brandenburg, eventually taking up a post teaching law at the newly founded university of Halle in 1694. From the mid-1690s, however, Thomasius also found himself at odds with one of the most prominent Pietists, August Hermann Francke, an educational reformer and the founder of the orphanage and school in Glaucha near Halle. The relationship remained uneasy until Francke's death in 1727. Thomasius died in the following year.

I. FAITH AND THE LIMITS OF PHILOSOPHY: THOMASIUS'S THEOLOGICAL VOLUNTARISM AND THE REVIVAL OF PIETY AROUND 1690

Around the time of his expulsion from Leipzig in 1690 Thomasius's thought on the relationship between faith and rational philosophy was straightforwardly voluntarist, in that he believed that divine nature and the decisions of the divine will were inscrutable to human reason. Although God had revealed certain truths to humanity in Scripture, these were of a different order from the truths of philosophy, which were founded on natural reason. Philosophy, therefore, could not be used for the explication of truths of faith. And yet, Thomasius wrote, this was exactly what the "scholastics", a broadly defined term, in which he included his orthodox Lutheran opponents, had done. They had used philosophy like pagans and had "attempted to deduce the mysteries of faith from philosophy, and made philosophy the measure of theology".¹³ The consequences had been severe. Philosophy had distorted the proper understanding of faith and had precipitated bitter and interminable theological disputes that would never be resolved. For while the truths of revelation were, by themselves, self-evident and easy to grasp, they were obscured by subtle metaphysical argument as soon as philosophically minded theologians applied their skills to them.

13 "[H]i sunt *fructus philosophiae gentilis*, vel potius abusus, quod Scholastici mysteria fidei ex philosophia deducere instituerunt, & philosophiam normam fecerunt Theologiae, contra praeceptum Apostoli, qui Colossenses graviter monuit, ne patiantur se decipi per philosophiam & inanem fallaciam" (C. Thomasius, *Institutiones Jurisprudentiae Divinae* [Frankfurt/Leipzig, 1688], 109).

Thomasius's concerns had a long pedigree in Lutheran thought, dating at least from the reintroduction of metaphysics into Protestant theological curricula at the end of the sixteenth century, if not to Luther himself.¹⁴ But they also coincided with those of Pietist reformers in his own time. In Leipzig in 1689, inspired by Pietist figures such as August Hermann Francke, students of theology had burnt their philosophy lecture notes.¹⁵ Phillip Jakob Spener, from whose *Pia desideria* of 1675 "Pietism" derived its name, complained, like Thomasius, that theology had been corrupted by "much that is extraneous, useless and smacks more of worldly wisdom"—that is, philosophy.¹⁶ Indeed, Spener thought that the confusion of faith and philosophy was a strategy of Satan to divide Christians into conflicting theological sects, which would quarrel over artificial doctrinal distinctions and ignore the charity Christ expected from his followers. For Pietists like Spener, abandoning metaphysical argument in theology would end the corruption of doctrine and restore the active piety that was the essence of Christian faith.¹⁷

Thomasius aimed to separate faith and philosophy, for much the same reasons as Spener.¹⁸ Christian faith and charity had suffered from the mixture of philosophy and theology.¹⁹ Like Spener, he emphasized the limitations of human reason in relation to the divine, taking up a position like that of other contemporary theological voluntarists such as, for example, Robert Boyle in England or Samuel Pufendorf.²⁰ His scepticism about the usefulness of reason, however, raised questions about the validity of established orthodox Lutheran theological debate. Orthodox Lutheran theorists such as Valentin

14 On the reintroduction of metaphysics into Protestant university curricula, see Max Wundt, *Die deutsche Schulmetaphysik des 17. Jahrhunderts* (Tübingen, 1939); W. Sparr, *Wiederkehr der Metaphysik* (Stuttgart, 1976).

15 H. Leube, "Die Geschichte des Pietismus", in idem, *Orthodoxie und Pietismus: Gesammelte Schriften* (Bielefeld, 1975), 182.

16 "[V]iel fremdbdes/unnuetzes und mehr nach der weltweißheit schmeckendes" (Jakob Spener, "Pia desideria", in idem, *Philipp Jakob Spener: Schriften*, vol. 1 [Hildesheim/New York, 1979], 23).

17 Ibid., 5–6.

18 Thomasius, *De felicitate subditorum Brandenburgicorum* (Halle, 1749), §VII: "[L]eguntur scripta Domini Speneri . . . praecipue vero ejusdem pia desideria, . . . quibus eo major applausus datur a desiderantibus redintegrationem sanctitatis Christianae, quo majori conatu ringunt, & ora distorquent Pseudo-Apostoli".

19 "[P]lurima ex scriptis humanis, paucissima ex verbo Dei proferrent, loco Theologicarum doctrinarum Philosophicas inculcarent, & ad quemlibet locum quamlibet controversiam oborto collo traherent, ut solum prurigini litigandi, calumniandi, atque disputandi possent satisfacere" (ibid., §VIII).

20 See J. Wojcik, *Boyle and the Limits of Reason* (Cambridge, 1997). On Pufendorf's theological voluntarism, see the conclusion of this essay.

Alberti were prepared to grant a more extensive role to philosophical argument in theological debate. Even though the human intellect was weak, and weakened further by original sin, it was assumed that human reason was similar in kind to the divine intellect and could form at least some conclusions on divine matters.²¹ Indeed, such beliefs sustained philosophical and theological teaching in the curricula of orthodox Lutheran universities like that of Leipzig.

It is not surprising that Thomasius's views were considered provocative by orthodox Lutherans, and sympathetic by leading Pietists. From the mid-1690s, however, Thomasius moved towards a position which appeared to many of his contemporaries to be even more extreme, and which eventually also drew the criticism of a number of leading Pietist theologians, including August Hermann Francke.

II. THOMASIUS'S RELIGIOUS ENTHUSIASM (I): THE RESPONSE OF THE ORTHODOX

In the early to mid-1690s Thomasius redefined the relationship between faith and philosophy in a way that earned him the reputation of being a religious "enthusiast". They were changes which involved rethinking both his notion of faith and his anthropology, two entities which were closely related to each other.

Of central importance to both Thomasius's faith and his anthropology was the question of the freedom of the human will. In his early works, such as the *Institutes of Divine Jurisprudence* of 1688, Thomasius had followed Pufendorf in arguing that the essence of the human will was the freedom to choose between any of the available courses of action. This, however, raised a difficult question about the nature of free agency. If the will was capable of acting entirely freely and indifferently towards any course of action, what was the reason for its choice of one action over another? On the other hand, if something did determine its decision, how could it be described as free? Several other philosophers, such as Hobbes or Leibniz, had developed their own responses to this classic problem, and in 1723 Christian Wolff was expelled from his post at the University of Halle for holding the view that every decision of the will was determined by a sufficient reason, a view that seemed to deny the freedom of the will, which was essential to moral imputability; it is alleged that Frederick William I was persuaded to banish Wolff when he was informed that Wolff's doctrine made it impossible to

21 V. Alberti, *Compendium Iuris Naturae Orthodoxae Theologiae Conformatum*, 2nd edn (Leipzig, 1696).

punish deserters from his army, because they could not be held responsible for their crime.²²

Thomasius's conclusion in the early 1690s was that the essence of the will was not that it encapsulated an ability to choose, as he had believed before, but was a form of love (*amor*), which he defined as a desire or passion for a particular end, a radically different concept from his earlier, Pufendorbian notion of an indifferent will. The nature of volition as *amor* explained its motive force. There were many varieties of this *amor* in human nature which were, in essence, different wills, competing with each other for the control of human actions. Each of these wills was directed to a different end, but it was impossible for humans to choose freely between these wills. They were, so to speak, hard-wired in human nature, although their proportionate strengths differed from one individual to the next. They could only be changed by transforming the very nature of the person. Thomasius combined his new conception of the will as a form of love with Augustinian conceptions of religious faith as love for God, which was opposed to the love for the world of the godless. His immediate source for these was French Jansenist writings and the works of mystical theologians, in which he had been developing an increasing interest. Many of the comments on the will as a form of love, for example, are reminiscent of the writings of the Jansenist Jacques Abbadie, whose works were to be found in Thomasius's personal library.²³ One of the most important pieces in which he put forward his new interpretation of faith was a sympathetic introduction to a work by the French mystic Pierre Poiret, *On Solid, Superficial and False Erudition* (*De Eruditione Solida, Superficiaria et Falsa*).²⁴ He also strongly praised the mystic and ecclesiastical historian Gottfried Arnold,²⁵ as well as many other similar figures, such as the theologian Christian Hoburg, the author of numerous spiritualist works.²⁶

Thomasius identified four basic types of volition or *amor*, each of which stood for the desire for a particular end. Three of these were corrupt and oriented exclusively towards worldly goods: avarice, which was directed towards material

22 B. Bianco, "Freiheit gegen Fatalismus: Zu Joachim Langes Kritik an Wolff", in N. Hinske, ed., *Zentren der Aufklärung. Vol. 1. Halle: Aufklärung und Pietismus* (Heidelberg, 1989), 111–55.

23 On Thomasius's increasing interest in French literature on *amour raisonnable*, see R. Lieberwirth, "Die französischen Kultureinflüsse auf den deutschen Frühaufklärer Christian Thomasius", *Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift der Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg* (Gesell. Reihe) 33 (1984), 63–73. On French Jansenist authors, cf. S. James, *Passion and Action* (Oxford, 1997), chap. 10.

24 Thomasius, "Dissertatio ad Petri Poireti libros de Eruditione", in *Programmata Thomasiana* (Halle/Leipzig, 1724 [1694]).

25 See Pott, "Christian Thomasius und Gottfried Arnold", 255.

26 Thomasius praises Hoburg at the end of chap. 6 in his *Versuch vom Wesen des Geistes*, 2nd edn (Halle, 1709).

wealth; ambition, directed towards external honour; and lust, which was directed to all forms of physical pleasure. The fourth, “reasonable love” (*amor rationalis*), was identical to Christian faith. It represented the longing for God and, in the state of innocence, had been powerful enough to control the three corrupt desires but had been weakened by original sin and was now too feeble to prevent humanity from falling into depravity.

This capacity for faith in the sense of *amor rationalis* and the three corrupt forms of *amor* was rooted in human nature, which Thomasius said consisted of three parts: the first was the body; the second was the soul (*anima*), which was the seat of the three corrupt passions; and the third was the spirit (*spiritus*), in which the love of God was based. The crucial difference between soul and spirit, *anima* and *spiritus*, was that the former was part of nature while the latter was supra-natural, a divine spark within humans which did not perish in death but returned to God.

Thomasius thought that although the spirit had lost its control over the passions in the *anima* through original sin, this control could be re-established after a lengthy process of regeneration, which could be completed only with the supra-natural intervention of divine grace. Natural reason, which was located in the *anima*, could begin this process of regeneration by allowing us to recognize the particular misery of the human condition, and to understand our inability to change our condition. But natural reason could not, on its own, suppress the corrupt passions in the *anima*, nor could it return the reasonable love of God in the spirit to its pre-lapsarian strength. This could only be accomplished by God directly, by an immediate supra-natural gift of divine grace, which would be given as a reward for sincere contrition and a yearning to escape from the misery of the post-lapsarian state. The consequence of this regeneration would be to restore the capacity for faith, and virtue and felicity as well. Humans would be freed from the distractions of the corrupt passions, and from the temptation to pursue false goods without true or lasting felicity.²⁷

An important implication of Thomasius’s new anthropology and view of faith was to render doctrines superfluous to religious belief, and it was this that exposed him to the charge of enthusiasm. Orthodox theorists objected that Thomasius’s view of regeneration presented conversion to the true faith as the result of a direct communication between the individual and God, which was only made possible by the presence of a spark of the divine essence in human nature. As a result, the clear distinction between God and his creation was removed and the two were conflated in a way that was suspect of “Spinozism”. By positing a particle of divine, and therefore uncreated, essence in each human, it was argued, Thomasius

27 Thomasius, “Dissertatio ad Petri Poirleti libros de Eruditione solida, superficiaria et falsa”, in *Programmata Thomasiana*; idem, *Ausübung der Sittenlehre*, 4th edn (Halle, 1708), 521.

turned created beings into a part of God himself. Thomasius's argument was seen as a typically enthusiastical interpretation of the world as an emanation of God's essence, rather than as his creation. Valentin Löscher, one of the most eminent orthodox Lutheran theologians of the time, complained in his *Deismus Fanaticorum* that the belief "that there is a divine particle in every creature" reflected the enthusiasts' identification of the world and God.²⁸ In Greifswald the orthodox theologian Justus Wesselus Rumpaeus noted that, like Thomasius, "all Fanatics who have ever existed defended the opinion that *God created this universe and whatever is in it out of himself or out of his essence*".²⁹

By emphasizing divine inspiration Thomasius thus appeared to dispense with the role of Christ and doctrine as necessary mediators between God and man. If regeneration was brought about by direct interaction between God and man, there was no need for his Son, and no need for revealed Scripture to direct humans towards the salvificatory faith. Orthodox Lutherans rejected Thomasius's anthropology, insisting that human nature had no divine third part, no *spiritus*, to provide humans with the "illumination" needed to give them direct contact with God. Believers, the orthodox held, were enlightened by understanding and accepting the doctrinal truths revealed in Scripture, not by God directly. Thomasius's belief in the *Christus internus* as the divine spark within, the orthodox Wittenberg theologian Wernsdorfer believed, made the revealed word redundant. "Therefore the word, Christ, the spirit, the seed, the light, the Gospel, according to the Fanatics, are all one and the same."³⁰

Thomasius believed, however, that doctrine was ineffectual to achieve faith. Faith depended on the redirection of the will from the corrupt love of the world to the pure love of God. Doctrines were opinions adopted by the intellect, but Thomasius's new anthropology downplayed the importance of the intellect in relation to the will-as-desire. This will, not the intellect, was the driving force

28 "[I]n qualibet creatura particulam divinam esse" (Valentin Löscher [*praeses*], G. R. Habbius [*respondens*], *Deismus Fanaticorum* (Wittenberg, 1708), 11). In a later passage in the same piece (16) Löscher referred to Thomasius's *Versuch vom Wesen des Geistes* as an example of this fanaticism. Deists, to Löscher, are those "[o]mnia, qui fingunt, esse creata Deum" (cf. the poem by Fr. Strunzius to the *respondens*). See also Valentin Löscher's *Unschuldige Nachrichten*, vol. 3 (Wittenberg, 1704), 805, where Thomasius's *Versuch vom Wesen des Geistes* is presented as an example of this "fanatical" belief in the world as "nichts anders als dessen [i.e. God's] ausgegangenes Wesen".

29 "Fanatici omnes, quotquot unquam existerunt, hanc defenderunt sententiam, *Deum ex se ipso, sive ex sua essentia, hoc universum, & quicquid est in eo, creasse*" (Justus Wesselus Rumpaeus [*praeses*], D. Harder [*respondens*], *Ex Loco de Imagine Dei Quaestionum Recentiorum imprimis Pietisticarum Pentadem* [Greifswald, 1705], 8).

30 "Verbum igitur, Christus, spiritus, semen, lumen, Evangelium, stylo Fanaticorum, sunt unum & idem" (G. Wernsdorfer [*praeses*], J. A. Hillig [*respondens*], *De Verbo Dei Scripto, sive Scriptura Sacra* [Wittenberg, 1708], 14).

of human nature; the intellect was merely an instrument in fulfilling the desires determined by the will, not its guide. Doctrine, therefore, could do nothing to turn the will from the corrupt love of temporal goods to the pure love of God.

From about 1693 Thomasius had also begun to doubt that there could be such a thing as a single true Christian doctrine at all. In his earlier writings he had still assumed the existence of a body of Christian doctrine, simple and evident and based on scriptural revelation, whose meaning would become clear once philosophy had been banned from theological debate. From the mid-1690s, however, Thomasius denied even the existence of this simple doctrine. The reason for this was that the subject of doctrines was God and the divine mysteries, which were incomprehensible to human understanding. He now concluded that no doctrinal opinions could be an accurate representation of God's attributes or of mysteries such as the Holy Trinity. For even if these doctrines were based on divine revelation, it had been presented and adapted to a weak and limited human understanding by the Creator. Doctrinal opinions were only metaphors, which were derived from things familiar to humans and represented their divine objects "improperly and imperfectly".³¹ No metaphor, therefore, was ever exclusively true. Metaphors could be false, because they could be misleading, but it was also possible for several different metaphors to be used to signify the same mystery of faith. "Orthodoxy" in the proper sense of the word, an exclusively true belief, thus did not exist, because there were several ways to conceive of the divine mysteries, which ultimately were beyond human comprehension. The love and veneration of God, which was the essence of faith, could be expressed in many different opinions or doctrines, all of which were equally valid, if they were professed with a sincere heart. The purpose of Scripture was not to provide humans with doctrines, but to be a sort of manual of regeneration, which informed humans of the origins and nature of their corruption and the nature of its remedies.

Orthodox Lutherans considered Thomasius's arguments to be typical of millenarian, enthusiastic sects such as the Quakers or the Philadelphic societies, who rejected the formulaic faith of established churches in favour of a "living" or "spiritual" faith of the heart. Although the orthodox generally agreed that doctrine was not alone sufficient for faith, "faith", however sincere, that was not guided by true doctrine was blind. An important distinction made by the orthodox in this context was that between *fides quae creditur* and *fides qua creditur*. The *fides quae creditur* ("faith that is believed") were the doctrines based on Scripture; *fides qua creditur* ("faith with which a belief is held") represented the trust in God and the sincerity with which a person believed in these doctrines. Sincere faith, the orthodox argued, required both. As Gustav Philipp Mörl wrote,

31 Thomasius, "Dissertatio ad Petri Poirleti Libros de Eruditione" (1694) in *Programmata Thomasiana*, §19.

“true faith was never found without love towards God, nor love towards God without true faith”.³² However, enthusiasts like Thomasius, the orthodox claimed, reduced faith to a pure *fides qua creditur*, a trust or love that was not guided by doctrinal beliefs. “We should beware”, Mörl warned, “how the Devil could try to subvert our faith by spreading this dogma.”³³ According to Joachim Fecht, “our reverence must not be stupid [*brutus*], such that we revere God and Christ, but are ignorant, who he is, whom we revere, or how we should revere him or why; instead it must be with the mind and the understanding”.³⁴ And in the words of Albrecht Christian Roth, a preacher at the Leipzig Nicolaikirche and adversary of Thomasius throughout the 1690s, faith required first knowledge (*notitia*) of its message, then assent by the intellect (*assensus*). The recognition of scriptural truth then led to trust in God (*fiducia*).³⁵

III. THOMASIUS’S RELIGIOUS ENTHUSIASM (II): THE RESPONSE OF THE PIETISTS

It was not only orthodox Lutherans, however, who considered Thomasius’s change of mind a case of religious enthusiasm. Even Pietists were keen to distance themselves from Thomasius’s recent, more extreme views. However critical Pietists were of traditional Lutheranism, they did not agree with Thomasius’s complete “enthusiastic” abandonment of orthodox doctrine as a standard of true faith.

This is brought out particularly clearly in the disputes initiated by Johann Friedrich Mayer’s critique of Pietism, the *Report of a Swedish Theologian on the Pietists* in 1706,³⁶ in which Mayer accused the Halle theological faculty of “enthusiasm”. Within a year both the Halle theological faculty and August Hermann Francke had published replies, in which they claimed their own teachings to be impeccably orthodox. They rejected the very term “Pietists”,

32 “[A]pud nos in confesso sit, nunquam inveniri veram fidem sine amore Dei, nec amorem Dei sine vera fide” (Anon. [G. P. Mörl], *Repetitio Doctrinae Orthodoxae* [Leipzig, 1697], §XI).

33 “[A]ttendamus . . . quomodo Diabolus per hoc dogma nostram fidem evertere possit” (ibid., §XI).

34 “Nec enim cultus noster brutus esse debet, ut tantum colamus DEum & Christum, ut ignari, quis sit, quem colamus, aut quomodo colamus, aut cur colamus, sed debet esse λογικός & rationalis” (J. Fecht, *Scrutinium profligatae ex Ecclesia Haeretificationis, Godofredo Arnoldo oppositum* [Rostock/Leipzig, 1714], 39).

35 A. C. Roth, *Thomasius portentosus* (Leipzig, 1700), 63–4.

36 Johann Friedrich Mayer, *Eines Schwedischen Theologi Kurtzer Bericht von Pietisten Samt denen Königlichen Schwedischen EDICTEN wider dieselben* (Leipzig, 1706). Although Mayer, an orthodox theologian at the University of Greifswald, published the report anonymously, the identity of the author was soon known.

saying that their opponents should consider “the unspeakable harm which has been done with the phrase ‘Pietists’” and avoid it.³⁷ They were outraged that theologians like Spener and Francke had been described as “the most terrible enthusiasts and seducers”.³⁸

Mayer had accused the theologians in Halle of locating faith “not in the intellect, but exclusively in the human will”,³⁹ of denying Scripture to be God’s word,⁴⁰ of questioning the existence of heresy⁴¹ and of believing that salvation was possible without Christ’s *meritum* on the basis of the holiness of life achieved as a result of regeneration.⁴² Ultimately, he had written, this amounted to defending the sufficiency of good works in attaining salvation.⁴³ Whether they admitted it or not, the Pietist theologians in Halle were enthusiasts.

All of these accusations, the Halle theologians protested, were unfounded. They declared that they believed faith to be *fides quae creditur*, though it had to be adopted sincerely in order to bring about the regeneration of the will.⁴⁴ One of their main quarrels with orthodox Lutherans was that the latter’s emphasis on justification through faith alone was excessive and instilled a false sense of security in believers. By saying that good works were not necessary for salvation, orthodox theologians led their congregations to believe that faith was not even necessarily accompanied by good works. Good works, the Halle theologians insisted, were not meritorious or efficacious with respect to salvation, but once a person had been truly converted he or she inevitably performed good works, because faith effected the regeneration of the believer’s nature.⁴⁵ Insisting on good works, therefore, did not mean that they were held to be sufficient for salvation.

37 “[W]as fuer unbeschreiblich vieles Unheil aus der Redens-Art/ Pietisten/ herkomme” (*Der Theologischen Facultät auf der Universität zu Halle Verantwortung gegen Hn. D. Joh. Fried. Mayers/ Professoris Theologi auf der Universität Greiffswald/ unter dem Namen eines Schwedischen Theologi herausgegebenen so genannten kurtzen Bericht von Pietisten* [Halle, 1707], 23).

38 “[D]ie allergreulichsten Schwaermer und Verfuehrer” (*ibid.*, 22).

39 *Ibid.*, 74 (“... weil sie auch den Glauben durchaus nicht im Verstande/ sondern bloß in dem Willen des Menschen suchen”).

40 *Ibid.*, 56.

41 *Ibid.*, 81–2.

42 *Ibid.*, 100.

43 *Ibid.*, 103.

44 *Ibid.*, 76–7. Francke similarly defended himself, writing that Scripture was always “his rule and measure” (“Regul und Bleymaß”; August Hermann Francke, *Aufrichtige und gruendliche Beantwortung eines an ihn abgelassenen und hierbey abgedruckten Send-Schreibens eines Christl. Theologi der Professorum Theologiae zu Halle und seine eigene Orthodoxie in der Lehre I. Von der Rechtfertigung II. Von der wahren und realen Gottseligkeit Und III. Wie deren Grund allein in Christo zu legen sey betreffend* [Halle, 1706], 42).

45 See *Der Theologischen Facultät auf der Universität zu Halle Verantwortung*, 106: the orthodox say: “Gute Wercke sind nicht noethig zu Erlangung der Seligkeit, davon aber

It meant that a person who professed to be Christian but did not perform good works could not be sincere.⁴⁶ Paul Anton, one of the leading figures of the Pietist movement in Leipzig and later in Halle, wrote that “living faith is not without the effort to perform good works, but faith justifies man before God without the assistance of our works”.⁴⁷

In his critique Mayer often referred to Thomasius, who, he wrote, “had defended the cause of many main enthusiasts against the orthodox”.⁴⁸ Also, together with his students Enno Brenneysen and Jakob Friedrich Ludovici, Thomasius had written in defence of indifferentism,⁴⁹ mocked doctrinal orthodoxy and asserted that pagans could be saved without believing in Christ.⁵⁰ In addition he had rejected the *fides quae creditur* altogether and maintained that saving grace was a matter of the will, not the intellect.⁵¹ In effect, Mayer equated Thomasius’s position with that of the Halle theological faculty.

The Halle theologians’ response to this was to distance themselves from Thomasius by protesting that Thomasius and his students were jurists, over whom the Halle theological faculty had no influence. Although the works of some of the jurists who had offended the orthodox (such as Johann Samuel Stryck’s *De Jure Sabbathi*) had been printed at the Halle orphanage’s press, the Halle theological faculty was not responsible for them because the orphanage

nichts gedencken/ wie es also zu verstehen/ daß keine wirkende oder verdienstliche Ursache der Seligkeit in den guten Wercken zu suchen oder zu setzen sey/ jedoch sey es an dem/ daß der allein seligmachende Glaube diese Eigenschafft habe/ daß er freylich nach vorher gegangener wahrer Bekehrung/ und nach der Vergebung der Suenden aus pur lauter Gnaden/ auch die guten Fruechte hervor bringen muesse.”

46 Cf., for example, Francke, *Aufrichtige und gründliche Beantwortung*, 23–4: “wir ... bezeugen/ ... daß die Busse und der Glaube der Menschen rechtschaffen und ungeheuchelt sey/ und die Rechtfertigung auch ihre Frucht beweise in einem geänderten Sinn und gottseligen Leben und Wandel”.

47 “Fides viva non est absque bonorum operum studio; sed justificat oram [sic, =coram?] Deo absque nostrorum operum subsidio” (Paul Anton, *Disputatio Hallensis prima de harmonia fidei quae justificat, & fidei, quatenus justificare dicitur* [Halle, 1702], 48).

48 “Wie dem auch gedachter Thomasius in seiner *Historia Sapientiae & Stultitiae* vieler Haupt-Schwaermer Sache wieder die Rechtgläubigen vertheidiget hat” (*Der Theologischen Facultät auf der Universität zu Halle Verantwortung*, 82).

49 Johann Friedrich Ludovici had published an *Untersuchung des Indifferentismi Religionum* (s.l., 1700) under the pseudonym Eric Fridlibius (= “Eric Peacelove”). Brenneysen was *respondens* for several university disputations by Thomasius, such as the *De Jure Principis circa Adiaphora* (Halle, 1695).

50 *Der Theologischen Facultät auf der Universität zu Halle Verantwortung*, 87.

51 “[D]ie Pietisten einer goettlichen Lehre den Namen des Glaubens durchaus nicht geben wollen/ weil sie auch den Glauben durchaus nicht im Verstande/ sondern bloß in dem Willen des Menschen suchen und setzen/ siehe des Haellischen Professoris Thomasii ...” (ibid., 74).

press was the university press. Censorship was a matter for the faculty whose member published the work, not for the director of the orphanage—that is, August Hermann Francke.⁵² In its defence, the faculty could point to the fact that Breithaupt, one of their professors of theology, had criticized Thomasius in 1697 for claiming that it was impossible to establish doctrinal criteria on which to decide questions of heresy.⁵³ Thomasius had become the cause of deep irritation for the Halle theologians. In 1700 Francke and Breithaupt had written a letter to Thomasius in which they criticized him for encroaching on theological matters in his law lectures and interpreting Scripture independently in public, something only trained theologians were permitted to do. They also claimed that he mocked theologians and led his students astray, encouraging them to stay away from church, avoid confession and scorn the truths of salvificatory faith.⁵⁴

IV. THE RETREAT FROM ENTHUSIASM

Although Thomasius never succumbed to his critics, the charge of enthusiasm was sufficiently serious for him to clarify his notion of religious faith a second time from the early 1700s onward. The main reason why his previous view seemed so close to enthusiasm was that he had argued that faith required the supra-natural gift of divine grace, which made regeneration and life lived under the rule of the divine spirit, the *spiritus*, possible. Regeneration thus was a miraculous event, because the *spiritus* was not part of nature and there could be no “natural method of moving from the state of foolishness to that of wisdom, but all improvement would be supra-natural and by miracle.”⁵⁵ As regeneration took place by a miracle, it had to remain mysterious to anyone but the person who had directly experienced it within him- or herself. This mystery of regeneration, however, opened the door to enthusiasts’ claims of being directly inspired by God in a way that was unverifiable by others.⁵⁶ “Gradually”, Thomasius wrote in 1708,

52 Ibid., 139.

53 See, e.g., his statement that “[s]acra Scriptura iis constet vocibus & locutionibus, quae quam accommodatissime sint ad exprimenda ejusmodi notationes, per quas *objectum* infinitum concipiatur notitia *in tantum positiva* & vera, in quantum hanc Spiritus Sanctus in nobis, ut est captus hominum, producendam intendit . . . ” (Justus Joachim Breithaupt, *Observationes Theologicae de Haeresi juxta S. Scripturae Sensum* [Halle, 1697], 11).

54 C. Hinrichs, *Preußentum und Pietismus* (Göttingen, 1971), 378–9.

55 “[N]ulla esset methodus transeundi ad statum sapientiae a statu stultitiae, sed omnis & tota emendatio esset plane supranaturalis ac miraculosa” (C. Thomasius, *Dissertatio nova ad Petri Poireti libros de eruditione triplici* of 1708, §XXX, repr. in *Programmata Thomasiana*).

56 Thomasius refers to Locke’s comment on enthusiasm that “[e]very Conceit that thoroughly warms our Fancies must pass for an Inspiration, if there be nothing but the strength of

"I was convinced by various observations that this path was highly dangerous and led to enthusiasm."⁵⁷

From around 1700, therefore, Thomasius tried to find a middle way between traditional orthodoxy, which he continued to oppose, and enthusiasm.⁵⁸ This middle way, however, differed from the type of moderate and rational "religious Enlightenment" described by David Sorkin, which combined a confident philosophical rationalism with the acceptance of scriptural revelation.⁵⁹ Thomasius's compromise between orthodox superstition and fanatical enthusiasm was not based on a particularly confident belief in the powers of natural reason. He retained his belief in the primacy of the human will over the intellect, which meant that reason followed, rather than guided, the impulses of the will. As long as the will was not reformed, therefore, reason would remain the instrument of its corrupt desires. It was not in itself and never could be a self-sufficient standard of truth and virtue.

Thomasius also continued to argue that this reform of the will was brought about by its regeneration, and that regeneration was a gift of divine grace. The difference, however, between this form of regeneration and his earlier "enthusiastic" beliefs was that Thomasius now considered regeneration to be a natural rather than a supra-natural process. This change required first of all a modification of his anthropology, in particular the rejection of his previous belief in a tripartite human essence (material body, *anima* and *spiritus*) in which a divine spirit, having been miraculously illuminated by God, was able to suppress the corrupt passions in the second part, the *anima*. The distinction between the natural *anima* and the supra-natural *spiritus*, in particular, he said, had been the foundation of the other errors of his earlier, quasi-enthusiastic view.⁶⁰ This was an important concession to his orthodox critics, who had rejected the notion of the tripartite nature of man as one of the principal errors in Thomasius's thought;⁶¹

our Perswasion" (John Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, 5th edn [London, 1706], Bk IV, chap. XIX, §14). Thomasius refers to this passage in Locke's *Essay* in §XXV of his *Dissertatio nova ad Petri Poirleti libros de eruditione triplici* of 1708 (see n. 55 above).

57 "[V]ariis obervationibus pedetentim convictus essem, periculosam valde esse hanc viam, & ad Enthusiasmum ducere . . ." (Thomasius, *Dissertatio nova*, §XXXIV).

58 In a preface to an edition of Grotius's *De Jure Belli ac Pacis* of 1707, for example, Thomasius criticized both orthodoxy and enthusiasm (Christian Thomasius, "Vorrede", in Hugo Grotius, *Drey Bücher vom Recht des Krieges und des Friedens* [Leipzig, 1707]).

59 Sorkin, *The Berlin Haskalah*, 16–17.

60 Thomasius commented on this in a footnote to §22 of the 1724 edition of his Preface to Poiret's *Dissertatio* (in the *Programmata Thomasiana*).

61 Roth, *Thomasius portentosus*, 39: "est hic error de homine ejusque tribus partibus inter *πρωτα ψευδα* Thomasii & inter principales, ex quo fere sequentes omnes promanant".

Valentin Löscher had denounced it as “the delight of all fanatics”.⁶² Thomasius now argued that human nature was bipartite and consisted of a material body and a spiritual *anima*, both of which were natural entities, not sparks of an uncreated divine essence trapped in human nature.⁶³

As before, regeneration was not an achievement of human philosophical reasoning, but granted by God. It required, of course, the co-operation of the human being concerned, but it was never within the power of humans to acquire it. Regeneration, Thomasius wrote, came with prayers, meditation and sincere contrition: “Pray to God . . . that he direct your actions with his grace and providence, that you may attain the desired end by achieving felicity.”⁶⁴ If there was a formula for imploring God for wisdom and temporal felicity, it lay in the Lord’s Prayer,⁶⁵ though formulae themselves were never enough:⁶⁶ “before God, the scrutinizer of hearts, sighs effect more than prolixity.”⁶⁷ For, in the last resort, wisdom was a “habit of divine virtue and the most subtle spirit”, which was attracted “by the magnet of prayer, so to speak”, and through which “foolishness in us is suffocated and bound”.⁶⁸ As for Scripture, it was still to be regarded as a sort of manual for regeneration which drew attention to the

62 “Huc pervulgata illa sent. de tribus per naturam hominis partibus, spiritu, anima & corpore, fanaticorum omnium deliciae” (Valentin Löscher, *Deismus Fanaticorum* [Wittenberg, 1708]). Justus Rumpaeus at Greifswald criticized Thomasius for the same reason in a dissertation *De Imagine Dei* (Justus W. Rumpaeus [*praeses*], D. Harder [*respondens*], *Ex Loco de Imagine Dei* [Greifswald, 1705], *Quaestio IV*, 15).

63 This change in Thomasius’s religious thought and anthropology occurred between about 1703 and 1705. This is evident from the 4th edn of his *Fundamenta Juris Naturae et Gentium*. There, in a footnote in the *Caput Prooemiale*, he observed that “in the first dictations of this chapter” in 1703 he had still distinguished a good divine spirit and an evil natural spirit in humans (*Fundamenta Juris Naturae et Gentium*, 4th edn [Halle, 1718], 3). When the *Fundamenta* were first published in 1705, however, he had already revised his view and rejected the idea of a separate divine *spiritus* in humans (*ibid.*, I, III, §77 ff.) “I no longer teach that man is composed of a good and an evil spirit, nor that rational love is a fourth passion, properly distinct from lust, avarice and ambition, but that it [rational love] is a tempered mixture of these three” (Thomasius, *Fundamenta Juris Naturae et Gentium*, 4th edn, “Caput Prooemiale”, §XXI, footnote).

64 “[O]ra Deum, . . . ut actiones tuas dirigat gratia sua & providentia, quo finem optatum in acquirenda felicitate adipiscaris” (Thomasius, *Cautelae circa Praecognita Jurisprudentiae* [Halle, 1710], cap. II, §23).

65 *Ibid.*, §35.

66 *Ibid.*, §36.

67 “[A]pud Deum, tanquam cordium scrutatorem, plus operentur suspiria, quam multiloquium” (*ibid.*, §32).

68 “Etsi enim sapientia tanquam habitus virtutis divinae, & subtilissimus Spiritus, penetrans omnia etiam Spiritus subtiles, (*Sap.c.* 7 v. 23) necessario prope sit omnibus hominibus, nemini tamen se obtrudit, neminemque cogit, sed attrahitur quasi magnete orationis, & conservatur, simul vero stultitia in nobis suffocatur & ligatur” (*ibid.*, footnote a).

corrupt nature of humans, its causes in the will, and its remedy, divine grace. “The student of wisdom will find no better book, which leads to a true understanding of nature and oneself than Scripture.”⁶⁹ Unlike the classical and mainly pagan philosophical texts, Scripture did not assume that reason was the dominant part of human nature, and it was from this rather than from pagan authors that one was to look for “the basic principles about GOD, his works and creatures, the condition, essence and powers of humans, divine will, human felicity and the means of acquiring it.”⁷⁰

Although Thomasius in a certain sense had distanced himself from enthusiasm, his religious views, therefore, remained highly heterodox. Doctrinal orthodoxy was no essential element of faith, and it is not surprising that orthodox Lutherans continued to describe Thomasius as a dangerous enthusiast and to group him with notorious radical theologians such as Conrad Dippel (the author of the *Papismus Protestantium Vapulans*), the ecclesiastical historian Gottfried Arnold, the French mystic Antoinette Bourignon and Johann Wilhelm Petersen.⁷¹

V. FAITH AND THE REFORM OF PHILOSOPHY

It is important to realize that Thomasius’s heterodox and “enthusiastic” religious beliefs were not opposed to his philosophical concerns but, on the contrary, were closely related to them. They were relevant in particular to his views on the need for a broader reform of learning. In his *Cautelae circa Praecognita Jurisprudentiae* of 1710, for example, it is noticeable how faith is constantly linked to *sapientia* (wisdom) in a broad sense, while false faith is identified with foolishness (*stultitia*). For although Thomasius believed that philosophy and faith were conceptually distinct and, indeed, had to be kept distinct, he also argued that the corruption of one necessarily corrupted the other. Correcting the orthodox views on religious faith therefore was also a necessary step towards the improvement of philosophy and secular learning in general.

Thomasius’s deep concern with the close relation between faith and philosophy is evident already in his writings of the late 1680s and early 1690s. There he argued that the misguided application of philosophical arguments had led to sectarian disputes and the decline of charity. This damaging use of philosophical reasoning

69 “Non meliorem librum vero studiosis sapientiae inveniet, qui ad veram naturae & sui ipsius cognitionem manuducat, quam scripturam sacram” (ibid., 33).

70 “Ergo . . . noxium est, si primo erronea principia de DEO, ejus operibus & creaturis, de statu, essentia ac viribus humanis, de voluntate divina, de felicitate humana, de mediis eam acquirendi, ex scriptoribus paganis hauriat” (ibid., 34).

71 See, e.g., G. Wernsdorffius (*praeses*), Johannes Reymundus (*respondens*), *De Indifferentismo Religionum in Genere* (Wittenberg, 1707), §§LXXX-XCV, where the author includes Thomasius in a list of religious enthusiasts.

reflected misconceptions about the nature of both philosophy and theology and was a sign that philosophers and theologians were overestimating the powers of natural reason, on which philosophy was based, and were failing to realize that theological truth could only be derived from scriptural revelation, which was unmediated by human argument. In essence, Thomasius's point was that we should be content with what God had revealed and resist the temptation to subject the divine to the scrutiny of human reason, which, while it was essential to understanding the temporal world, was an inadequate resource for exploring the divine.

As Thomasius's notion of faith and his anthropology changed from the mid-1690s, so did his notion of the relationship between philosophy and faith. Loosely, this change could be described as a shift from a theological to an anthropological voluntarism. Thomasius continued to emphasize the inscrutability of God, but he now also began to stress the importance of the will rather than the understanding in explaining human nature. The essence of the will, he now said, was not free choice, but a desire or passion which impelled humans towards certain actions in pursuit of particular ends, be they wealth, honour, physical pleasure (the three ends of corrupt human nature) or the divine (the end of regenerate human nature). The understanding was the instrument of this will-as-desire, not its guide.

Thomasius also combined with this view of human nature a common notion of the practical purposes of both philosophy and religion, without which all learning, whether theological or philosophical, was mere empty pedantry.⁷² Clearly, this was similar to the contemporary religious concerns of theologians like Spener, that religion should not be limited to theoretical knowledge of the truths of faith but should be reflected in the believer's conduct. But it also drew on a much longer tradition of critiques of learned pedantry, which went back at least to early sixteenth-century satires by humanists such as Sebastian Brant on bookish learning.⁷³

The emphasis on the practical importance of learning meant that Thomasius now began to see the will as the main focus of his philosophy and religious thought. He argued that attempting to educate the intellect was futile, because the end to which the will directed human actions was prior to the processes of

72 For a discussion of Thomasius's "practical" orientation, cf. F. Barnard, "The Practical Philosophy of Christian Thomasius", *Journal of the History of Ideas* 32 (1971), 221–46, though Barnard interprets this practical orientation in rather modern terms.

73 G. Forster, "Charlateneria eruditorum", in S. Neumeister and C. Wiedemann, eds., *Respublica litteraria. Die Institutionen der Gelehrsamkeit in der frühen Neuzeit* (Wiesbaden, 1987). In his 1702 edition of the *Introductio ad Philosophiam Aulicam* published in Halle, Thomasius included a piece by the Franeker jurist Ulric Huber on pedantry.

the understanding. As he wrote in 1710, “foolish thoughts cannot be thrown out, as long as the will drives the understanding towards foolish thoughts”.⁷⁴

Orthodox Lutheranism, Thomasius believed, both reflected and reinforced a basic failure to understand these central truths about human nature. The orthodox assumed that the purpose of religion was to provide the *understanding* with the correct opinions about God, the nature of justification, the merit of Christ’s death on the cross, and so on. In other words, they assumed that learning would be the key to salvation. As Thomasius put it, “[t]his final foolishness is therefore the greatest of all, because it is almost incurable, and it is founded in the universal doctrine of the schools that the felicity of man depends on the intellect. On this basis we have said elsewhere that the learned fools are greater than all others.”⁷⁵ This error about human nature was deliberately perpetuated by the “scholastic” orthodox clergy because it was the foundation of their authority over the laity. It allowed them to present theological doctrine as an essential part of Christian faith, while they claimed at the same time to be the ultimate arbiters in all doctrinal questions. Replacing the notion of faith as doctrinal understanding with one of faith as a purified volition, therefore, also necessitated abandoning the emphasis on the understanding rather than the will in the interpretation of human nature, and in philosophy and secular learning generally. The orthodox clergy’s self-interested refusal to discard the idea that the essence of faith was doctrinal belief was a formidable obstacle to realizing the truth about human nature, in which, as Hume would later put it, reason was the slave of the passions and ought to be nothing else.⁷⁶

Existing accounts of human nature were fatally flawed. In his only treatise on natural philosophy, the *Essay on the Nature of Spirit* (*Versuch vom Wesen des Geistes*), Thomasius criticized both orthodox Lutherans and Cartesians for defining human nature in terms of the intellect. “Man” was not a “rational animal”, as Aristotle, the “scholastic” orthodox theologians and, in a different way, Descartes had argued, but a being governed by volition, that is, by desires and aversions. Thomasius then proceeded to furnish his theory of volition with a natural philosophical foundation, derived from the universal, hermeticist principles of sympathy and antipathy, which dictated the properties of all natural bodies, from stones to plants and animals.⁷⁷ His natural law theory in the *Foundations of the Law of Nature and Nations* (1705) was based on the same

74 Thomasius, *Cautelae circa Praecognita Jurisprudentiae*, cap. II, §8.

75 “Haec ultima stultitia idea maxima est, quia fere incurabilis, fundata videlicet in universali doctrina scholarum felicitatem hominis dependere ab intellectu. Unde alibi diximus eruditos stultos esse majores reliquis” (ibid., cap. I, §50, footnote n).

76 David Hume, *Treatise of Human Nature* (Oxford, 1978), 415.

77 On Thomasius’s natural philosophy, cf. W. Schmidt-Biggemann, “Pietismus, Platonismus und Aufklärung”, in F. Grunert and F. Vollhardt, eds., *Aufklärung als praktische Philosophie:*

assumption about the importance of the will-as-desire in human nature. Morality required the reform of this will rather than the education of the understanding, because the understanding was only the instrument for satisfying the desires of the will and did not have the power to change human behaviour.⁷⁸ As in the case of religious faith, one of the main errors of the orthodox Lutherans' "scholastic-theological systems" of moral philosophy was their overemphasis on the intellect as the key to virtue and happiness.⁷⁹

The recognition that religious faith consisted in the reform of the will rather than the correction of the understanding therefore prepared the way for true philosophy as well as true religion. This intimate connection between religion and philosophy is brought out particularly clearly by Thomasius's use of the term "wisdom" (*sapientia*) to describe both the state of faith and that of virtue. Philosophy and faith were therefore not independent of each other. They were both subordinate parts of a more general notion of "wisdom" which did not admit the division of human existence into two mutually independent spheres of secular life and religious belief.

VI. CONCLUSION: A RELIGIOUS ENLIGHTENMENT?

Thomasius's philosophy, then, cannot be understood apart from the complexities of his religious thinking. Nor can his place in the early Enlightenment be understood without reference to his ideas on the nature of Christian faith. Religion drew him to Pietism around 1690 and was the cause of the criticism his philosophy received from orthodox Lutherans and, later in the 1690s, from the Pietists. Thomasius appeared to be advocating the sort of millenarian enthusiasm that Lutherans even in the late seventeenth century associated with the Anabaptist unrest of the Reformation era in the Holy Roman Empire. Faith as a state of the will, which was prior to any understanding in the intellect, seemed to reduce religious belief to a claim to divine inspiration, the truth of which was unverifiable by any specific doctrinal standard.

Although faith and philosophy were distinct spheres, Thomasius believed that they were, at the same time, closely dependent on each other. A false conception of religious faith threatened to corrupt philosophy, just as much as false philosophy threatened to corrupt religion. Orthodox Lutheran theology, with its emphasis

Werner Schneiders zum 65. Geburtstag (Tübingen, 1998); T. Ahnert, "De Sympathia et Antipathia Rerum: Natural Law, Religion and Mechanistic Science in the Works of Christian Thomasius", in T. Hochstrasser and P. Schröder, eds., *Early Modern Natural Law Theories: Contexts and Strategies in the Early Enlightenment* (Dordrecht, 2003), 257–77.

78 Thomasius, *Fundamenta Juris Naturae et Gentium*, 4th edn, Bk I, chap. I, §97.

79 Ibid., §132, note.

on doctrine, had led believers to overestimate the importance of the “head” in relation to the “heart” in human nature. It produced false, “scholastic” and pedantic learning, and neglected the true wisdom, which required humans to recognize that the source of their moral corruption was the will-as-desire, not the intellect. Thomasius’s argument thus was about religious truth as much as it was about philosophical truth. His ideas did not reflect an attempt to detach the question of religious truth from secular philosophy, as Ian Hunter has argued. On the contrary, Thomasius believed that true faith was important for understanding human nature and thereby for the state of philosophy in general. His indifference to doctrine did not reflect indifference to the truth of religious belief. It only meant that religious truth was not defined in doctrinal terms, but—no less narrowly—as a state of the human will.

Thomasius’s “enthusiastic” emphasis on the will-as-desire and its importance for philosophy may seem far removed from the intellectual concerns of the Enlightenment. But Thomasius’s belief in the superiority of the pre-intellectual, spontaneous guidance of the “heart” over the reasoning of the “head” became a firm part of the culture of *Empfindsamkeit* in the Protestant German Enlightenment. His idea that true philosophy was about the reform of the will and the passions rather than the conclusions of the intellect was continued after his death by the flourishing genre of sentimental literature. It was a central preoccupation of publications such as the *Moralische Wochenschriften*, the moral weeklies, which offered their readers practical advice on the guidance of their conduct. Thomasian anthropology and moral philosophy provided these texts with a basic view of human nature and a toolbox of arguments about the passions which were recycled in a series of essays with advice to readers on day-to-day moral questions.⁸⁰ In this respect, Thomasius’s “enthusiastic” religious faith, via his anthropology, contributed directly to some of the main intellectual currents of the German Enlightenment.

The case of Christian Thomasius also illustrates the limitations of the notion of a moderate “religious Enlightenment” which aimed to use enlightened reason to reform theology and bring it closer to true faith.⁸¹ Faith and philosophy were closely related to each other in Thomasius’s thought, and yet Thomasius was no example of a “religious Enlightenment” of this kind. He did not display particular confidence in the powers of human reason, and his concern was not to use enlightened reason to correct theology, but to exclude the use of reason from religious debate. Thomasius’s scepticism about the powers of human reason, however, was not exceptional within the early Enlightenment. It is questionable whether any significant thinker of the German Enlightenment before about 1730

80 On this see in particular F. Vollhardt, *Selbstliebe und Geselligkeit* (Tübingen, 2001).

81 See, e.g., the important work of Sorkin, *The Berlin Haskalah*.

believed that reason could be at odds with the authority of revelation and therefore had to be reconciled with it. "Reason" in the first quarter of the eighteenth century in Germany was in general not regarded as a critical faculty that could be the measure of revealed truth and might even be contrary to it. The question with which theorists of the early German Enlightenment were concerned was whether reason could perform an apologetic function in relation to faith. That is, could rational philosophy contribute to demonstrating and explaining the truths of the Christian religion or not?⁸²

Like Thomasius, Samuel Pufendorf, for example, argued that reason could not perform this role. He too stressed the inscrutability of God's nature and his decisions to human understanding, and the irrelevance of rational philosophy to the interpretation of revealed doctrine.⁸³ The incarnation of the Son of God, for example, "far exceeds all Reach of Humane Research, so it is not fitting that we should dare to plunge our Curiosity further into it, than so far as the Sacred Scripture leads us, and as may suffice to understand the Office of the Saviour".⁸⁴ The same principle applied to the union of God and man in Christ. All metaphors that were used to describe this relationship had to be taken "with due Qualifications".⁸⁵

While Pufendorf and Thomasius believed that truth in Christian religion depended on *excluding* rationalist argument from debates over revelation, their contemporary Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz argued the opposite. Reason was not distinct from scriptural argument, but a means to demonstrate its truth and to explain its meaning. Leibniz could put forward this argument because he believed that God was a supremely rational being whose decisions could, at least to a limited extent, be understood by humanity with the help of its rational powers. The difference between divine and human understanding was not one of kind but of degree. In God's mind were eternal, quasi-geometrical truths, many of which were accessible to the human intellect. Humans could use their understanding of these verities to confirm the truth of certain revealed doctrines. This did not mean that only those doctrines that could be explained by human reason were acceptable: God's intellect was, after all, infinitely superior in degree to human reason. It did, however, mean that it was possible through rational argument to achieve a consensus on parts of revealed doctrine.

82 On the 'apologetic' rather than 'critical' use of reason in relation to religion, see W. Schmidt-Biggemann, *Theodizee und Tatsachen* (Frankfurt am Main, 1988), 61.

83 See Samuel Pufendorf, *The Divine Feudal Law*, ed. S. Zurbuchen (Indianapolis, 2002).

84 *Ibid.*, §XLIII.

85 *Ibid.*, §XLIV.

The role of scriptural revelation was therefore diminished, but it did not disappear entirely.⁸⁶ Christ's teachings revealed no more than the principles of natural religion based on reason. These had been known to individual wise pagans even before Christ, though the public religion of the pagans had always corrupted the divine light with "ridiculous and absurd" ceremonial.⁸⁷ The wise pagans had also refrained from speaking openly about the principles of natural religion, out of fear of being executed like Socrates.⁸⁸ The role of Christ had been to promulgate the natural religion of reason as public religion, in a form which was accessible to lesser minds.⁸⁹ When the Roman Empire converted to Christianity, this only turned the natural religion of the wise into public religion. Reason in Leibniz's thought did not question the truths of revelation, but reaffirmed them.

From the 1730s a different conception of the relationship between religion and reason began to appear. Neither Pufendorf, nor Thomasius, nor Leibniz had believed that reason could be used to *correct* what had been presented as revealed truth. Their reluctance to use reason as a critical tool with which to examine revelation distinguished them from particular currents in German religious thought after about 1730. These were the (probably unintended) product of Wolffian philosophy. Christian Wolff had refrained from discussing revelation, but he had argued that the truth of revelation, by its nature, had to be evident to human reason.

The implications of this view became most obvious in the publication of the infamous 'Wertheim Bible' of Johann Lorenz Schmidt in the mid-1730s. Schmidt's work was a systematic examination of the Pentateuch from a naturalistic perspective, in which human reason became a critical instrument for examining the truth of the text. Unlike Pufendorf, who had said that the Holy Trinity was a mystery that could not be explained on the basis of human reason, Schmidt wrote that it was contrary to reason and therefore absurd.⁹⁰ Schmidt was no atheist, but he argued that what had been presented as divine revelation was

86 See, e.g., Leibniz's "Von der wahren Theologia mystica" (1695–1700): "Among the external teachings there are two which best awaken the inner light: sacred Scripture and the experience of nature" ("Unter den äußerlichen Lehren sind zwei die das innerliche Licht am besten wecken: das Buch der Heiligen Schrift und die Erfahrung der Natur"; quoted in H.-P. Schneider, *Justitia Universalis* [Frankfurt am Main, 1967], 465).

87 P. Riley, *Leibniz' Universal Jurisprudence* (London, 1996), 106.

88 Cf. the 1714 Vienna lectures on the Greeks, which are discussed in *ibid.*, 107.

89 Cf. Leibniz's "Discourse on Metaphysics" (1686), in G. W. Leibniz, *Philosophical Texts*, ed. and trans. R. S. Woolhouse and R. Francks (Oxford, 1998), 54–93, 89: "Ancient philosophers had very little knowledge of these important truths. Only Jesus Christ has expressed them divinely well, and in a manner so clear and so accessible that even the dullest minds could understand them"; see also Schneider, *Justitia Universalis*, 460.

90 On the Wertheim Bible see J. Israel, *Radical Enlightenment* (Oxford, 2001), 552–8.

often the product of human invention, and that natural reason could expose the false authority of these man-made texts.⁹¹

Thomasius, however, was far from subordinating religious belief to rational argument in this way. His aim was precisely to shield faith from the excessive reliance on human reason and the intellect that he attributed to his orthodox opponents. “Reason” continues to be described as the central principle of enlightened philosophy. The examination of the relationship between faith and philosophy in Thomasius’s works, however, shows that the meaning of “reason” in the Enlightenment is more ambiguous than it might at first appear to be.

91 Another famous example of this new, critical use of reason to question the authority of Scripture as an historical text was the writings of Hermann Samuel Reimarus. These became the subject of the famous ‘Wolfenbütteler Fragmentenstreit’ of the 1770s, in which the dramatist Gotthold Ephraim Lessing played a key role. On this see H. E. Allison, *Lessing and the Enlightenment: His Philosophy of Religion and its Relation to Eighteenth-Century Thought* (Ann Arbor, MI, 1966), chap. 3.